

California Agricultural Vision
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My name is June Van Wingerden. I am currently president of the Santa Barbara County Flower and Nursery Growers' Association. My husband and I grow cut flowers in greenhouses in Carpinteria and Nipomo, both coastal towns. Our son, a UC Berkeley graduate, is currently managing one of our greenhouse operations in Nipomo. I grew up on a cotton and corn farm in Tulare California which is still farmed and owned by my family.

There is a lot of agriculture in California. Some of it will remain by 2030, but market conditions and our own government continue to make our survival very difficult. I would like to see greenhouse agriculture survive into those years. Coastal greenhouse agriculture provides a safe way to have agriculture close to the urban line. As population increases, it becomes more and more difficult to farm next to the non farm population. Greenhouse agriculture provides a way to do this, integrated pest management works well in a greenhouse, while offering a way to make a profit on very expensive coastal land. Unfortunately the California Coastal Commission, charged with protecting agriculture, and the County of Santa Barbara have restricted greenhouses in the Carpinteria Valley. Greenhouses are restricted from further growth because they are not pretty to look at. Coastal Commission staff actually spoke about how the walls and paths of a greenhouse cover prime soils while ignoring the fact that a greenhouse can produce 3 to 6 times the quantity of product that is grown in the same open field space. At a time greenhouse ag should have been encouraged, two government bodies who know almost nothing about farming decided that to protect agriculture in the coastal zone, greenhouses must be restricted. Coastal greenhouse agriculture without any kind of direct subsidies has competed favorably in the world market, competing directly with imports from South America. The profit margin is razor thin and that profit is being eaten away by government imposed regulations on air quality and water quality programs that have produced more paperwork and bureaucracy than results. Coastal greenhouses produce cut flowers, vegetables, plugs for field crops, pot and container plants, and more. We provide year round, well paid, work for farm employees.

To survive, agriculture must have flexibility to change crops according to market conditions, access to a stable, legal work force, viable housing alternatives for employees, and less costly restrictive regulation. Any regulation on agriculture should at least be designed by an agency that

actually works on a working farm and encourages farm viability. The “California Grown” program has been beneficial. The research done by UC Davis, Riverside and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo has been invaluable. California agriculture is resilient but must be guarded from our well-meaning urban neighbors. California agriculture is important to California and the world. We must survive to 2030 and beyond.